

engaged in criminal conduct or activity as a condition precedent to entering this information in the data bank in the first place."

In other words, to even collect this information, there must be a reasonable allegation that a crime has been committed.

This data is for tracking criminals. The regulation specifically mentions crimes such as drug trafficking, loan sharking, trafficking in stolen property, gambling, extortion, smuggling, bribery, corruption.

Homeland Security and DPS, in one of their many stories, claimed that they were merely looking for a plane that they thought was missing or may have crashed. Now, of course that is not true either. But missing planes are located through the FAA and law enforcement, not by using criminal databases improperly in violation of the law.

Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive.

Homeland Security, produce the tapes. Homeland Security, produce the transcripts. Department of Public Safety, do the same.

We respect DPS in Texas. They are a great agency. We know they were not doing it independently. They were doing it at the direction of others. They were following orders.

You know, Sharon Watkins blew the whistle on Enron. Arthur Andersen got caught shredding documents. Cover-ups just do not work.

Is this a serious problem, or is it just a third-rate burglary, as we learned about in our history lessons? Mr. Speaker, only time will tell.

#### DEMOCRATIC TEXAS LEGISLATORS TRUE HEROES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. LAMPSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up with what the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SANDLIN) was talking about with the people that decided to stand up against such an egregious process, where they felt left out and had no recourse in Texas but to go away from the legislative process long enough to slow things down and let it cool off. Because none of us like to be excluded from the development of legislation.

There it affected many different kinds of legislation. It had to do with school finance reform. It had to do with what we have been talking about as redistricting. But the redistricting issue was just one small piece of it. It by itself was an egregious process, where people literally were locked out of the capital building in the State and not allowed to attend hearings.

We do not have a closed government in the United States of America, whether it is at the Federal level, whether it is in the State of Texas or any other State in this Nation. We

have fought, we have died, we have shed blood to have a government that is open, where we are free, where we can do the kinds of things that we believe in.

So when legislators are pushed to the point where they have to take extraordinary measures to get their message across, they ought to be treated as heroes, the heroes that I certainly believe that they are.

I found it interesting the other night, Saturday night, the weekend of Armed Forces Day, a gentleman came up to me at an event where I was speaking about Armed Forces and the wonderful military people who have sacrificed themselves, their families and sometimes their lives fighting for the freedom of those of us in the United States to make sure that our government is free.

This gentleman came up and thanked me, or praised me, I guess, for not being a Member of the Texas legislature and not having gone off to Ardmore, Oklahoma. I said, "David, I must strongly disagree with what you are saying." I said, "I do so largely because I look at you and see the commitment that you made to the United States of America by being willing to put on that uniform and to go and potentially sacrifice your life for my freedoms, for what I believe in for my government." I said, "But, you know, we can lose our government from within as well as from without, and we have to be vigilant in making sure that the process that we set up is one that all of the people of our country can be comfortable with, can trust, can believe in, and know that our interests are going to be addressed."

So here we have recently sent men and women of this Nation off to fight in a country that is far, far away from us, and it was the same ideals that we are talking about that they went off to another area.

The Armed Forces answered our call, and some of them gave their lives to free the people of Iraq. So we went to war in Iraq to free a people from a government that abused its powers.

Iraqis were unable to question the actions of Saddam Hussein. So are we unable to question the actions of the leaders of the State of Texas. That is wrong. We were successful in Iraq with a war, but now the abuse of power is happening right here at home, by the most unlikely of agencies in the United States Government, the Department of Homeland Security.

Secretary Tom Ridge has stonewalled efforts by Members of Congress and the press to learn why the Department of Homeland Security used its equipment to track down former house Speaker Pete Laney's airplane to find the Texas Democrats who went to Oklahoma in opposition of an unfair, unconstitutional redistricting plan. That is repressive government. We sent our military to bring free and open government to another Nation. We need to do the same in the United States of America.

On the day that we called for an investigation of these happenings in Texas, the Department of Public Safety ordered documents regarding the misuse of Federal law enforcement for political purposes to be destroyed. Secretary Tom Ridge and the Texas DPS have failed to answer questions about their involvement and what happened exactly. They are trying to cover up an abuse of power.

Our Nation is facing a Code Orange level of terrorist alert. The resources of the Department of Homeland Security should be focused on that. Instead, they were ordered to skirt Federal statutes and had their manpower diverted for purely political purposes.

In this country, the people have a right to question the actions of their government, and the government has a responsibility to its citizens to be forthright and to give them an answer. This is an abuse of power of the most egregious kind.

It is time for Secretary Ridge to turn over the tapes, open up our government, tell the people in the United States of America what we are doing, and please do not pass on the divisiveness of the United States House of Representatives to the State of Texas.

#### EXTEND UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WATSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, at the end of this month, millions of unemployed Americans will begin to lose their benefits under the Temporary Extended Unemployment Compensation program. In my State, the State of California, 150,000 people will run out of benefits and still not have a job on May 31. Congress needs to act to extend these benefits.

During a recession, unemployment insurance is one of the most efficient ways to help Americans and to keep the economy moving. Unemployment insurance puts cash in the hands of people who need it most, people who will spend the money on rent and groceries, rather than put it in the bank.

Unemployment insurance is cost-effective. Unlike the Republican budget, the Federal Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund currently has a surplus of more than \$21 billion. That money can easily meet the needs of America's unemployed until we can get the economy moving again.

Instead, the President and the Republican Party have spent their time and energy trying to pass tax cuts for wealthy investors. This House has passed a tax cut totaling more than \$500 billion. That is money that will not go to unemployed working families but, instead, to the President's wealthy political supporters. In fact, if we were to take all the money that the Republicans have set aside for their tax cut, we could create high-paying jobs for all